Going on parental or carer’s leave
A PLANNING AND CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR TEAM MEMBERS
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Welcome

Macquarie University is committed to helping employees who are also parents and/or carers integrate their work demands with their personal life needs, and have a fulfilling and rewarding career.

If you’re planning to take leave from work for the arrival of a new baby or you’re caring for young children, an elderly parent, or a family member with a disability, illness or chronic medical condition, this planning and conversation guide will assist you to navigate through the various conversations, decisions and actions you may be taking. There’s a separate guide for managers, so that together you can best plan for your leave and/or flexible work requirements, and discuss any other support you may need.

The guide is intended to be read in conjunction with the information and relevant policies on the University Carer’s Hub website, including:

- leave and other provisions
- support and resources
- carer stories
Parents and parents-to-be

At Macquarie, we use a broad and inclusive definition of parents to allow us to support the many ways in which employees can have children and be a family. This includes married couples, single parents, those in same-sex relationships or de facto relationships, adoptive or foster parents, employees who are surrogates, and those who care for stepchildren.

COMMUNICATING YOUR NEWS

TIMING

When to tell your manager your news is your choice. Your timing will depend on your circumstances, eg if you're experiencing an illness related to your pregnancy, have concerns about the type of work you're doing (such as working with chemicals), or have a high-risk pregnancy. Wherever possible, the University asks staff to provide at least 10 weeks' notice of their intention to take paid parental leave.

A completed leave form detailing the intended leave arrangements is required for all types of parental leave.

You can find more details of notice periods and a link to the parental leave application form on the University Carer's Hub website.

You'll also need to provide supporting documentation with your application:

- Parental leave (primary carer – birth related) – a medical certificate confirming pregnancy and expected due date
- Parental leave (primary carer – placement related, ie adoption or foster care) – copy of placement papers from the relevant agency
- Parental leave (surrogate) – a medical certificate confirming pregnancy and expected due date and copy of the birth certificate when the baby is born
- Parental leave (primary carer – partner) – copy of the birth certificate or placement papers from the relevant agency
- Partner leave (supporting) – copy of medical certificate confirming pregnancy, or birth certificate.

PREPARE FOR THE CONVERSATION

Schedule a meeting with your manager where you can have a conversation in private. It's advised that you inform your manager before you announce your news to colleagues more broadly; either at work or via social media. You don’t need to have a thorough plan at this stage but be as prepared as you can be by thinking through:

- When the baby is due and when you anticipate you’ll begin your parental leave
- Any time off you anticipate needing in the lead-up to the baby's birth, such as for doctor's appointments, or whether you're taking any annual leave before the baby’s arrival
- Any flexible work arrangements you are considering
- What key projects you're working on and whether you think you’ll require any support to complete them
- Coverage for your role while you're on leave
- A contingency plan should you have to finish work earlier than planned
- How and when you're going to share your news more broadly with your team, students or other stakeholders
TAKING LEAVE

PARENTAL LEAVE

It’s important for you to be across the leave options available to you as an employee, whether you’re giving birth or you’re supporting your partner during the arrival of your baby. For more information about what leave is available, refer to the University’s Carer’s Hub website, where you’ll find the Parental Leave Policy and a guide to some ‘frequently asked questions’ to help you plan your leave. If you have questions or concerns, speak with your HR Client Team representative.

As you read through the information you might wish to consider:

• How much leave you think you’ll need. You can change your mind later if your circumstances change.

• What type of parental leave are you eligible for (paid or unpaid depending on your employment status)?

• If you want to add any other types of leave (accrued annual leave or long service leave) onto your parental leave to extend the paid component of your leave

• If you want to take any unpaid leave

You may also be eligible for the Australian Government Parental Leave Scheme and/or Dad and Partner Pay, which provide financial assistance to the parents of newborn children. For more information about your eligibility and to apply, visit the Department of Human Services at humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/parental-leave-pay

OTHER TYPES OF LEAVE

You may be able to combine other types of leave, such as annual leave, long service leave or leave without pay with your parental leave. For more information about other leave options, search for ‘leave’ on the University’s staff website. You can also discuss your entitlements and options with your HR Client Team representative.

Applying for leave

A completed leave form detailing your intended leave arrangements, and confirmation of primary care responsibilities is required for all types of parental leave. Once you’ve discussed your plans with your manager, complete the parental leave application form and submit it to your manager for approval. You can find the link to this form on the University’s Carer’s Hub website.

If you’re pregnant and applying for parental leave (primary carer), you’ll also need to provide a medical certificate from your treating doctor confirming your pregnancy and the expected due date. If you’re adopting or fostering a child under 18 years of age, you’ll need to provide a copy of placement papers from the relevant agency confirming the date you’ll be taking the child into your care.

If you’re a partner applying for parental leave (primary carer), you’ll need to provide a copy of the child’s birth certificate or placement papers from the relevant agency.

For partner leave (supporting) you’ll need to include a birth certificate or medical certificate confirming the birth of the child. If you’re adopting or fostering a child under 18 years of age, you can provide evidence of the date you’ll be taking the child into your care.

If you’re a surrogate applying for parental leave you’ll need to provide a medical certificate confirming pregnancy and expected due date and copy of the birth certificate when the baby is born.

Commencing leave

If you’re pregnant, you may commence the period of parental leave up to six weeks prior to the expected date of the birth. You may be able to commence your parental leave earlier if the University approves your application for an early commencement. You can’t commence parental leave later than the date of the birth of the child.

For adoption, leave commences from the date of the placement of the child. Partner leave is usually taken at the time of the birth or placement of the child. You are encouraged to discuss your leave needs with your manager.
WORKING THROUGH PREGNANCY

Macquarie University is committed to providing a safe working environment for all its employees. If you have concerns about your health or the physical impact your pregnancy might have, you should seek advice from your treating doctor and speak to your manager.

You may be concerned about the requirements of your role or working environment, for example, your role might require you to stand a lot or undertake manual handling, or you might work with chemicals, biological hazards or animals. Your manager can work with you to make adjustments that will allow you to continue to work safely. These may include adjustments to your workstation, environment, role or working arrangements. You can also seek assistance from the University’s Health Management Adviser if required. Search the staff directory on the University website for contact details.

If you have concerns regarding your commute or other work-related travel, speak to your treating doctor to assess whether it’s safe to travel and discuss any precautions you may need to implement to your travel plan.

If you’re unwell during your pregnancy you can use your sick leave. While you don’t need to give specifics about your physical symptoms, you’re encouraged to keep the line of communication open between you and your manager.

During your pregnancy – or your partner’s pregnancy – you may take two days of paid personal leave for the purpose of attending routine medical appointments or pre-natal classes held during working hours.

While pregnant, you may find that you need to change the way you work. Macquarie University offers a range of flexible working options that you can request on a short, medium, or longer-term basis, depending on your specific needs. These include:

- Not working 9am – 5pm: Flexible working hours allow you to start and leave earlier or start and leave later.
- Not working in the office: Mobile working allows you to work from home or another location as required.
- Not working full-time: Depending on your role, part-time or job-sharing arrangements might be possible.

For more information about flexible work options, making a request, and setting yourself up for success, search ‘flexible work’ on the University’s staff website.
UNPLANNED EVENTS

Should anything unforeseen impact your pregnancy, support options are available. Let your manager know about any changes to your leave arrangements as soon as you’re able to. If you’re making more than one change to your leave arrangements, you’ll also require approval of your Executive Dean or Head of Office. Check the Parental Leave Policy for the minimum notice requirements.

Should your child be born prematurely, your parental leave will start from the date of birth, rather than the date you’d originally planned. All that’s required is a revised leave application to be submitted when convenient.

In the event of a stillbirth or if your child dies within four weeks of birth, you’ll be eligible for 14 weeks of paid parental leave and may also access your personal leave entitlement. In the event of a miscarriage or still birth prior to 20 weeks’ gestation, you may access your personal leave and leave without pay.

To ensure you get the support you need, you might wish to consider:

- Letting your manager or a trusted colleague know what has happened. If you don’t wish to do this yourself, you can have someone else get in touch with your manager on your behalf.
- Whether you want colleagues to know about your loss. Who you tell and what you tell them is your choice.
- Accessing the Employee Assistance Program, a free confidential counselling service for Macquarie staff and their families. Call 1300 360 364 to make an appointment or find out more by searching for ‘Employee Assistance Program’ on the University staff website.
- Talking to your manager about how your return to work can be structured; for example, you might require a graduated return or another type of flexible working arrangement.

STAYING IN TOUCH

How connected you want to be with your team while you’re on leave is your choice. It’s beneficial to have a conversation about this with your manager prior to your leave; however, you can still speak with them about this after your leave commences. It’s okay if these arrangements need to change once the baby arrives – just let your manager know when you can. The choice about how and when you’re contacted is yours however there are certain things the University needs to contact you about, like restructures or relocations that might impact you on your return to work. Things to consider include:

- What you want to be kept informed about. Do you want to be sent staff communications or be informed about professional development courses? Do you wish to be kept up to date about projects you’re involved in? Would you like to be invited to team social events? The choice is yours but be clear with your manager about what will work best for you.
- Your preferred way of keeping in touch. Do you want to receive a phone call, or would you prefer a check-in via email or text message? You may also want to ask a colleague to keep you across any developments in the team and the University more broadly.
- For new parents, under the Australian Government Keeping in Touch Days Scheme, employees on unpaid parental leave will be paid to participate in activities such as planning days, training or conference attendance, up to a maximum of 10 days. The scheme aims to facilitate a smooth return to work for new parents; however, employees aren’t obliged to take part in any work activities while on parental leave.
## Going on parental leave checklist

### Look at your options

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<th>Check your entitlements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Review the Macquarie University Parental Leave Policy for leave options and entitlements. You may wish to check with your HR Client Team representative if you need clarification about what’s available to you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determine your eligibility for the Australian Government Parental Leave Pay Scheme—and apply directly to the Department of Human Services</td>
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### Before going on leave

- Your planned parental leave dates – commencement and return
- The type of leave you’re taking: paid, unpaid or annual, as well as the Australian Government Parental Leave Pay
- Antenatal appointment arrangements
- Any concerns about health and safety
- Status update about key projects you’re working on
- How your work will be managed while you’re on leave (for academic staff this could include arrangements for supervision, cover for teaching, administration and research, as well as a possible extension of research grant funding)
- What your handover will be – to whom and where your notes will be saved

### While on leave

- Your career development and work plan, including whether you would like to be considered for any career development activities or work unit planning days
- Keeping in touch – how often and your preferred method of communication (email, phone call or text message)
- Who your primary contact in the team will be

### Planning for your return

- How your return to work might look, eg full-time, part-time or a staged return
- Flexible working options you are considering, eg working from home regularly or occasionally, flexible start/finish times
- Any other support you anticipate needing for your return, eg breastfeeding breaks

### Taking leave

- Complete the parental leave application form, attaching the required documentation and submitting to your manager for approval
- Make sure your personal contact details in HR Online are correct
- Ensure that transition and handover plans are finalised
- Investigate childcare options for when you return

### Leaving the office

- Create a contact list of people you’d like to keep in touch with while on leave
- Confirm that your professional memberships will continue while on leave
- Set up your out-of-office email and voicemail before you go, letting people know who to contact in your absence
- Send a note to your colleagues and contacts on your last day letting them know who to contact in your absence
Available support for parents

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT OPTIONS
A range of support services are available to employees.

- The Employee Assistance Program (‘EAP’) is a free 24/7 confidential counselling, coaching and wellbeing service, which is available to employees and their immediate family members. It provides support around how to best achieve lifestyle, work, personal and family goals, and gives assistance with managing work and life experiences, issues or concerns. Search for ‘EAP’ on the University’s staff website.

- Macquarie has partnered with Medibank Private to offer employees corporate health cover, including an ongoing 9 per cent discount on the cost of private health insurance. Search for ‘Medibank Private’ on the University’s staff website.

- A range of medical services are available on or near campus, including a general practitioner clinic. Search for ‘hospitals and clinics’ on the University’s staff website.

- Employees can keep active at the Sport and Aquatic Centre. Search for ‘sport and aquatic centre’ on the University’s staff website.

ON-CAMPUS CHILDCARE
- There are three early childhood education and care centres at Macquarie University. Places are limited but priority is given to staff and students. For more information on childcare and school holiday programs search for ‘children’s services’ on the University’s staff website.

OTHER SUPPORT OPTIONS
- Department of Human Services: humanservices.gov.au/individuals/families for information on payments and services for families and children

- Australia’s online child care portal: mychild.gov.au


- Department of Health Pregnancy, Birth and Baby website: pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/partners/department-of-health

- Families NSW: families.nsw.gov.au for information about health and wellbeing of children up to eight years and their families


USEFUL CONTACTS
If you need additional information or support, contact your HR Client Team representative.

If you have any questions about diversity and inclusion, contact a member of the Workplace Diversity and Inclusion team at workplacediversityinclusion@mq.edu.au
Carers of others

TAKING LEAVE TO CARE FOR OTHERS
We know how stressful it is when your loved ones aren’t well and need your care. We recognise that some caring responsibilities are predictable and can be anticipated in advance, while others are less predictable, require immediate attention or are of an irregular nature. Whether you are caring for a child, an elderly parent, or another family member with a disability, illness or chronic medical condition, Macquarie University offers support to help you manage your work and caring commitments. Leave options include:

- **Paid personal leave**: Staff receive an allocation of personal leave that may be used for personal sick leave and family/carer responsibilities (please see the University’s Personal Leave Policy).
- **Annual leave**: Employees receive four weeks of annual leave per year, which can also be used for caring for others if paid personal leave entitlements are exhausted or not appropriate to the circumstance.
- **Purchased leave**: Eligible professional staff can purchase an extra five or 10 days of leave per year. Eligible academic staff can purchase an extra four weeks of leave per year.
- For more information about leave options, search for ‘leave’ on the University’s staff website. If you have questions or concerns, speak with your HR Client Team representative.

FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS
You may find that you need to change the way you work to meet your caring requirements. Macquarie University offers a range of flexible working options that you can request on a short, medium or long-term basis, depending on your specific needs. These include:

- **Not working 9am – 5pm**: Flexible working hours allow you to start and leave earlier or start and leave later.
- **Not working in the office**: Mobile working allows you to work from home or another location as required.
- **Not working full-time**: Depending on your role, part-time or job-sharing arrangements might be possible.

For more information about flexible work options, making a request, and setting yourself up for success, search for ‘flexible work’ on the University’s staff website.

TALKING TO YOUR MANAGER
It’s important to let your manager know if you have caring commitments and that you may require changes to your work arrangements; for example, time off work or flexible work arrangements.

Things to consider when speaking with your manager include:

- If it’s an emergency situation and therefore not planned for, let your manager know whether you’re contactable during the day, and how you’re managing any urgent deadlines due that day. Ask them for support if you’re not able to find the solution yourself.
- If it’s a caring situation where you can anticipate what you need in advance, such as taking time off to look after an elderly parent, schedule a meeting where you can have a conversation in private. Outline the key projects you have on and whether you think you’ll require any support to complete them during the time you’ll be on leave.
- As this may be a time of intense pressure for you, be open with your manager about what you need. You may not have all the answers at the time, but let them know that you’ll stay in contact and work with them to hand over or reschedule any urgent projects or work.

It may also be useful to think about whether you want colleagues to know about your family circumstances. You may be working different hours or from home more often, so they may enquire about your situation. Who you tell and what you tell them is your choice.
# Carer’s support checklist

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<th>LOOK AT YOUR OPTIONS AND PLAN IN ADVANCE</th>
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<td><strong>Understand the issue</strong></td>
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<td>Make a time to discuss your situation with your manager</td>
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<td>Think about what support you need to balance your caring responsibilities with your work</td>
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<td>Think about any possible impacts on your role, current projects, funding, stakeholders, colleagues or students</td>
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<td>Think about how long you will need support</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you need advice or support around your role as a carer, you can speak with the EAP or contact Carers NSW</td>
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<td><strong>Explore the options</strong></td>
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<td>Review the University’s support measures available for employees with caring responsibilities (for details see the University’s Carer’s Hub website)</td>
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<td>Explore with your manager the options available and consider what is suitable for your specific circumstances and the nature of the work you do</td>
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<td><strong>Assess the options and the implications</strong></td>
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<td>Consider which options would work best for you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Your manager will also need to consider any issues, for example, the effect on other team members and key projects</td>
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<td>Think about the benefits or disadvantages of this arrangement</td>
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<td>Consider any implications on your career and your remuneration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assess whether you can balance your caring responsibilities with your work responsibilities under this arrangement</td>
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<td><strong>Develop a plan</strong></td>
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<td>Consider any issues or concerns raised by the manager</td>
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<td>Consider any adjustments needed if working from home, particularly any work health and safety issues</td>
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<td>Consider any travel issues</td>
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<td>Develop a plan with your manager for any new work arrangements</td>
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<td>Discuss any changes for performance objectives if required</td>
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<td>Document the agreement with your manager so you both have a useful reference point</td>
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<td><strong>Monitor and review the plan</strong></td>
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<td>Let your manager know how things are going to ensure that what has been agreed it is working as expected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agree to trial the new arrangement for a set period then review how effective it has been so far for you and your manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be prepared to make adjustments to the arrangement if there’s a change to your circumstances or the needs of your team/the University, or to ensure it continues to be effective for both parties</td>
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*Adapted from Supporting Carers in the Workplace: A Toolkit, Australian Human Rights Commission*

Available support for carers

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY SUPPORT OPTIONS
A range of support services are available to employees.

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• A range of medical services are available on or near campus, including a general practitioner clinic. Search for ‘hospitals and clinics’ on the University’s staff website.

• Employees can keep active at the Sport and Aquatic Centre. Search for ‘sport and aquatic centre’ on the University’s staff website.

ON-CAMPUS CHILDCARE
• There are three early childhood education and care centres at Macquarie University. Places are limited but priority is given to staff and students. For more information on childcare and school holiday programs search for ‘children’s services’ on the University’s staff website.

OTHER SUPPORT OPTIONS
• The Australian Government Department of Human Services: humanservices.gov.au/individuals/carers – information for carers about caring related payments and services

• Carers NSW: carersnsw.org.au – an organisation supporting carers with useful fact sheets and practical advice on caring for others

• Carers Australia: carersaustralia.com.au – the national peak body advocating on behalf of Australia’s carers, providing research and resources

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